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Mayor Barrett Announces 6.8% Drop in Teen Births

Through outreach and education efforts, city announces progress in meeting 2015 goal

MILWAUKEE -- For the fifth year in a row Milwaukee has recorded a decrease in the teen birth rate, which is now at a historically low level, Mayor Tom Barrett and health officials announced Wednesday.

City of Milwaukee Health Department data show that in 2011 there were 33.4 births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 17 years old. For that age group, the birth rate has decreased from a rate of 35.8* in 2010, 41.3 in 2009, 46.7 in 2008, 47.1 in 2007, and 52.0 in 2006.

Although Hispanic girls and non-Hispanic Black girls are still five to six times more likely than non-Hispanic White girls to give birth as teens, 2011 showed significant declines in every racial and ethnic group. A particularly bright spot in the trends is the teen pregnancy rate for Hispanic 15- to 17-year-olds in Milwaukee, which has decreased by a remarkable 18 to 23% every year since 2008.

Officials say the current trend indicates that Milwaukee is well on its way to reach its goal of 30 births per 1,000 by 2015, a goal announced by United Way of Greater Milwaukee, the Center for Urban Population Health, and the Milwaukee Health Department in 2007.

"These results are very encouraging," said Mayor Barrett. "We are making incredible progress in reducing the teen birth rate. We should be proud of our accomplishments and what this success means for the future of our young people and for our community as a whole."

The City's decline in teen pregnancy rates is proceeding at a more rapid rate than the decline nationally, according to the latest figures available. Between 2009 and 2010, the national 15- to 17-year-old teen pregnancy rate decreased 11.7 percent; during that same period, Milwaukee's rate decreased 13.2 percent.

"What these rates mean today is that fewer young girls in Milwaukee are getting pregnant and more teens are going to have a better chance of finishing high school and achieving their life goals," said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

The decline is attributed to the continuation of an unprecedented, all-hands-on-deck approach adopted by the Milwaukee community since the goal of 30 births per 1,000 by 2015 was set.

"We are so gratified by this community's unwavering commitment to the teen pregnancy prevention initiative," said Nicole Angresano, vice president of community impact at United Way of Greater

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Milwaukee. “For over six years, diverse constituents have dedicated time and money toward broad strategies that are working—as evident in yet another decline of the rate.”

Local businesses, media outlets, health care providers, Milwaukee Public Schools, and community-based and faith-based organizations have all joined the effort. A public marketing strategy has sought to show teens how getting pregnant negatively affects both young men and young women, while encouraging parents to talk to their teens about the issue. The campaigns have also brought attention to the problems of sexual violence and victimization of teens.

“These numbers are the result of hundreds of people across this community coming together to make teen pregnancy prevention a top priority,” said Elizabeth Brenner, co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee. “The steady progression toward our goal is proof of the type of needle-moving impact we can have on our community’s most critical issues when we pool resources, expertise and talent around a single goal.”

*The 2010 rate reported last year was based on preliminary numbers that were not yet certified by the State. We initially reported an overall rate of 35.7 for 15-17 year olds. After the State of Wisconsin Vital Records office confirmed the 2010 birth figures for Milwaukee, the rate was adjusted to 35.8. The currently-reported 2011 rate is, likewise, based on preliminary numbers that have not yet been certified by the State.

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